

Facing a Tightening Labor Market, Teton County and Town of Jackson, WY seek Compensation Data

Objective

Teton County and the Town of Jackson, WY are finding it harder to recruit qualified talent. The high cost of housing forces many employees to commute long distances though a canyon or over a mountain pass. Staff are often less available for rapid emergency response which is especially vital for public safety issues. Given the proximity of the Town and County offices there is in practice a system of pay parity between the two organizations, particularly in the public safety, planning and inspections functions. The Town and County retained CPS to assist in a market salary and benefit survey in order to gauge future recruitment and retention efforts. In addition to the compensation objectives the County sought a review of its classification plan and job evaluation instrument.

Solution

CPS had initial project meetings with county elected and appointed department directors, and town department directors to clarify the scope and develop an understanding of current internal equity structure, compensation philosophy and potential pay compression issues. CPS then gave labor market agency recommendations and began to design, develop and distribute the survey. Of the twenty-eight employers surveyed, more than 80% responded to the survey by completing the survey or submitting relevant data. The survey included data collection from a number of organizations that operate in similar resort, inter-mountain regions in Colorado, Utah, Montana and Idaho as well as the state of Wyoming. It included local public and private employers as well. The survey contained 89 benchmark jobs of which 37 were town jobs and 52 were county jobs. CPS was able to make several recommendations based on the external market and internal equity analysis.

Teton County last did a complete classification and compensation study in 1999. To prepare for the current study, CPS met individually with elected officials and department heads to discuss classification and compensation issues. Consultants then reviewed all job descriptions to assess the currency of the plan and for content and format and reviewed the departmental and occupational series. Some recommendations that stemmed from this review were somewhat politically sensitive, and included a centralization of the classification process to ensure consistent application of policy and practice and to allow the County to maintain the integrity of the plan.

In the last part of the study, CPS evaluated the County's current methodology for job evaluation. Like the classification review, the assessment of the methodology was based on interviews with department directors, review of the Point Factor Evaluation instrument factors and weighting, and an assessment of the system in application and use. CPS provided to the County a generic version of an evaluation system developed specifically for public employers called the Position Appraisal Method.

Results

CPS submitted a final Total Compensation Study to Teton County and the Town of Jackson, WY in July 2006. All survey, classification, and job evaluation findings were presented. The County and Town have several recommendations including some non-traditional public sector options such as adoption of a housing allowance program to encourage the availability of timely emergency response services and a seasonal bonus program for parks and recreation and public transit staff to assist in employee recruitment and retention.

The results we achieved with CPS were far beyond our expectations and certainly a great return on our investment in its services. The depth of knowledge in local government, combined with the exhaustive analysis and reporting and the straight-forward approach to recommendations, provided Teton County with an exceptionally valuable and practical plan. I wholeheartedly recommend CPS for any organization.

**Jan Livingston,
Teton County
Administrator**



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